

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY RABAT

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MO, US

SUBJECT: ATHERTON-BOUTALEB MEETING

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1. AM0ASSADOR BOUTALEB CALLED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON JANUARY 28 TO DISCUSS US-MOROCCAN RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE SAHARA SITUATION AND THE MEETING BETWEEN SECRETARY KISSINGER AND HASSAN EMISSARY KARIM LAMRANI TO TAKE PLACE THE FOLLOWING DAY.

2. AMBASSADOR BOUTALEB DESCRIBED COMMENTS MADE TO ADMIRAL TURNER BY KING HASSAN REGARDING IMPLICATIONS OF F-5 ALLEGEDLY SHOT DOWN BY SA-6 MISSILE. POINTING OUT THAT GOM VIEWS SAHARA AND ANGOLA SITUATION AS CLOSELY ANALOGOUS HE SAID THAT GOM WANTS U.S. TO CLARIFY ITS POSITION WITH USSR BEFORE SAHARA SITUATION REACHES TRAGIC PROPORTIONS. BOUTALEB POINTED TO UNCONTESTABLE EVIDENCE THAT ALGERIANS HAVE INTERVENED ON SAHARAN TERRITORY RESULTING FROM CAPTURE OF ALGERIAN SOLDIERS AND BATTLE AT AMGALA. ALTHOUGH

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ALGERIANS CLAIM THEIR FORCES WERE ONLY TRANSPORTING FOOD

AND MEDICINE THIS CONSTITUTES DELIBERATE VIOLATION OF MOROCCAN TERRITORY WHICH GOM CANNOT ACCEPT, HE SAID. AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THAT GOM NOT ASKING FOR INTERVENTION OF US FORCES OR AID BUT ONLY WANTS MORE TIMELY AND FORTH-COMING ATTITUDE BY USG IN RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FOR ARMS PURCHASES. NOTING RECENT ARMS SHIPMENTS TO ALGERIA FROM USSR AND LIBYA HE EXPRESSED FEAR THAT MILITARY BALANCE NOW SHIFTING IN ALGERIAN FAVOR AND ASSERTED THAT US WOULD GAIN NOTHING BY ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN EVEN-HANDED APPROACH WHILE ITS FRIENDS SUFFER. LAMRANI, HE SAID, WOULD MAKE ESSENTIALLY SAME POINTS AND EXPECT TO RETURN TO MOROCCO WITH A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF US POSITION.

3. CONCERNING SOVIET ROLE IN SAHARA BOUTALEB, IN RESPONSE TO ATHERTON QUESTION, SAID GOM DOES NOT HAVE PRECISE INFORMATION AND FOR THIS REASON WOULD ALSO LIKE COOPERATION WITH US IN AREA OF INFORMATION SHARING. HE CITED SPANISH AS SOURCE FOR REPORTS THAT SOVIET, CUBAN, AND VIETNAMESE PRESENT IN SAHARA AND SAID THAT ONLY PROBLEM BETWEEN GOM AND SAHARA PEOPLE WAS IN AREA OF ALGERIAN BORDER WHERE POPULATION HAD BEEN INCITED BY SUOVERSIVE ELEMENTS. GOM HAS NO INTENTION OF TAKING AGGRESSIVE ACTION AGAINST ALGERIA AND HAS NOT PENETRATED ALGERIAN TERRITORY, HE SAID, BUT RESISTANCE INSIDE SAHARA WOULD BE CLEANED OUT. MEANWHILE GOM HOPED THAT US IN ADDITION TO HELPING BALANCE SOVIET ARMS SUPPLIES TO ALGERIA AND SHARING INFORMATION WOULD WATCH SITUATION CLOSELY TO DETERMINE WHETHER OUTSIDE ELEMENTS ARE INVOLVED.

4. OUTLINING CURRENT STATUS OF ARMS SUPPLY TO GOM ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON NOTED DECISION TO SUBMIT LONG-SCHEDULED F-5 PROPOSAL TO CONGRESS AND POINTED OUT THAT RECENT PUBLICITY ON SAHARA QUESTION COULD MAKE APPROVAL MORE DIFFICULT SINCE MANY CONGRESSMEN ARE AGAINST SENDING ARMS TO AREA OF CONFLICT. QUESTION OF ACCELERATED DELIVERIES, HE SAID, IS BEING GIVEN URGENT CONSIDERATION BUT FACTORS SUCH AS PRODUCTION CAPACITY, REQUIREMENTS OF US FORCES, AND COMMITMENTS TO OTHER COUNTRIES COMPLICATE SITUATION AND LIMIT FLEXIBILITY.

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HOWEVER, MATTER BEING GIVEN URGENT ATTENTION AND GOM WILL RECEIVE ANSWER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WITH RESPECT TO NEGATIVE DECISION ON REDEYE MISSILE, WHICH AMBASSADOR BOUTALEB QUESTIONED IN VIEW OF FACT REDEYE HAS BEEN SOLD TO JORDAN, ASST. SEC. ATHERTON NOTED CONTROVERSIAL NATURE OF WEAPON BECAUSE OF ITS POSSIBLE USE BY TERRORIST ELEMENTS AND EXPLAINED THAT U.S. DID NOT WANT TO JEOPARDIZE CONGRESSIONAL RECEPTIVITY TO SALE OF OTHER EQUIPMENT

BY INCLUDING REDEYE. AMBASSADOR BOUTALEB STRESSED THAT OTHER SIDE NOT HAMPERED BY SAME CONSTRAINTS ON WEAPONS ACQUISITION, AS F-5 INCIDENT INDICATED.

5. AT END OF MEETING AMBASSADOR BOUTALEB REFERRED TO RECENT GOM AGREEMENT TO VISITS OF U.S. NUCLEAR-POWERED WARSHIPS, NOTED THAT THIS DECISION IS POLITICALLY RELATED

TO THE CURRENT SITUATION, AND URGED THAT THE U.S. SEND A SHIP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE THAT GOM IS NOT ISOLATED. ATHERTON WAS NON-COMMITTAL. INGERSOLL

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